

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A splice for connecting thin-walled components to each other, said splice comprising a first end portion of a structural ~~component (101)~~, component, a second end portion of a further structural ~~component (102)~~, component, an overlapping contact surface area between said first and second end portions, at least one fatigue critical row (6) of rivets subject to dynamic loads and passing through said first and second end portions and through said overlapping contact surface area, a further row (7) of rivets extending between an end portion edge (4A) and said at least one fatigue critical row of rivets, said further row (7) of rivets comprising ~~[[means]]~~ rivets holding said first and second end portions together in a direction perpendicularly to said overlapping contact surface area, said second row (7) of rivets comprising rivets shafts (10, 16), and a gap providing play (at 11, 12, 15) between each said rivet shafts and any one of said first and second end portions for while simultaneously permitting a relative motion of said first and second end portions in a direction parallel to said overlapping contact surface ~~[[area.]]~~ area for reducing crack formation and crack propagation and for relieving stress from said fatigue critical row (6) of rivets.

2. (original) The splice of claim 1, wherein said second row of rivets comprises rivets including said holding means in the form of a rivet head, a rivet shaft, and a rivet closure for providing a positive interlocking force in a direction parallel to a central axis (9) of said rivet

6 shaft and for further providing a slidable fit in said
7 direction parallel to said overlapping contact surface
8 area, said positive interlocking force providing friction
9 in said overlapping contact surface area.

1 3. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft
2 comprises a first shaft section with a first shaft diameter
3 fitting snugly into a first rivet hole in one of said first
4 and second end portions, and a second shaft section having
5 a second diameter smaller than said first shaft diameter,
6 said second smaller shaft diameter providing a gap (12)
7 between said second shaft section and a wall of a second
8 rivet hole in the other end portion of said first and
9 second end portions for permitting said limited relative
10 motion.

1 4. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft
2 comprises a uniform shaft diameter between said rivet head
3 and said rivet closure, said first end portion having a
4 first rivet hole with a hole diameter providing a snug fit
5 between a wall of said first rivet hole and said rivet
6 shaft, said second end portion having a second rivet hole
7 with a hole diameter larger than said uniform shaft
8 diameter thereby providing a gap (12) between said rivet
9 shaft and a wall of said second rivet hole for permitting
10 said limited relative motion.

1 5. (original) The splice of claim 3, comprising a press-fit or
2 interference fit between said first shaft diameter and a
3 wall of said first rivet hole.

- 1 6. (original) The splice of claim 4, comprising a press-fit or
2 interference fit between said rivet shaft and a wall of
3 said first rivet hole.
- 1 7. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft
2 comprises a shaft shoulder (16) for clamping one of said
3 first and second sheet metal end portions.
- 1 8. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein said
2 rivet shaft has such an axial shaft length that a defined
3 clamping force providing friction in said splice is applied
4 to said first and second sheet metal end portions when said
5 rivet is set.
- 1 9. (original) The splice of claim 2, wherein said rivet shaft
2 has a threaded shaft end, and wherein said rivet closure
3 comprises a closure ring or collar with an internal
4 threading cooperating with said threaded shaft end for
5 applying an adjustable clamping force to said first and
6 second sheet metal end portions.
- 1 10. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein each of
2 said rivets in said second row of rivets ~~are "Hi Lok"~~
3 ~~fitting rivets each including a "Hi Lok"~~ comprises a
4 locking collar.
- 1 11. (currently amended) The splice of claim 2, wherein said
2 first and second end portions comprise an upper ~~[[are]]~~
3 sheet metal end ~~portions~~ portion and a lower ~~wherein said~~
4 ~~first and second~~ sheet metal end ~~portions~~ comprises

5 portion, said upper sheet metal end portion comprising a
6 recess (20) for receiving said rivet head.

1 12. (currently amended) The splice of claim 1, wherein said
2 further row (7) of rivets extends directly next to said end
3 portion edge (4A) and in parallel to said at least one
4 fatigue critical row (6) of rivets that is subject to
5 dynamic ~~[[loads.]]~~ loads, whereby said end portion edge
6 (4A), said fatigue critical row (6) and said further row
7 (7) extend in parallel to one another.

1 13. (new) The splice of claim 1, wherein said gap providing
2 play is positioned between said rivet shaft and that end
3 portion of said first and second portions which forms an
4 upper end portion.

[RESPONSE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE]